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## User Satisfaction Report

January 16, 1989



Ministry of the Attorney General

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# **Victim/Witness Assistance Program**

## **User Satisfaction Report**

**January 16, 1989**

**A Report Prepared for**  
**the Ministry of the Attorney General - Ontario**

**by**

**R.R. Ross and Associates, in collaboration with**  
**Jamieson, Beals, Lalonde and Associates.**



## **Foreword**

This report integrates the findings of two independent research projects of the Ministry of the Attorney General of Ontario: the Victim/Witness Assistance Program Client User Satisfaction Survey conducted by Jamieson, Beals, Lalonde and Associates and R.R.Ross Associates; and the Professional Opinion Survey conducted by Lee Axon, Consultant, Toronto.

The views expressed in this report are those of the respective author(s), and do not necessarily reflect the position of the Ministry of the Attorney General.



## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In 1984, the Attorney General of Ontario announced his intention to create a Victim/Witness Assistance Program. After approval of its administrative structure and provision of funding, the Program commenced operations in 1987 at ten sites throughout Ontario. The Program's goal is to provide victims and witnesses of crime who are involved in a criminal court proceeding with information and assistance. As such, the Program forms part of a general initiative within Ontario to improve the treatment of victims and witnesses of crime, and in particular, to improve the criminal justice system's treatment of victims of domestic assault, sexual assault, and child abuse.

In spring, 1988, a process evaluation of three sites was undertaken, and on the basis of recommendations contained in those evaluation reports, various program refinements have been initiated. The Program is becoming more stabilized and integrated into the local environments in which it operates, and the demand for service remains high.

Two additional, external studies were commissioned in October, 1987, to examine client and professional opinions of the Program. A Client User Satisfaction Survey was conducted by Jamieson, Beals, Lalonde and Associates in collaboration with R.R. Ross Associates. The objective of the Client User Satisfaction survey was to examine client experience and satisfaction with the Program's services. A telephone survey of 164 clients of the Program across seven sites (Etobicoke, Hamilton, Kingston, London, North York, Ottawa, Pembroke, and Windsor) was conducted.

A Professional Opinion Survey, conducted by Lee Axon, assessed the degree of acceptance and satisfaction held by the professional community who also serve clients using the Program's services. Semi-structured interviews were held with professionals across five sites: Windsor, Hamilton, Ottawa, North York, and London<sup>1</sup>

Both opinion surveys suggest that there is widespread support for the continuation of the Program. Clients expressed consistently high degrees of satisfaction with the Program's service. Throughout the interviews conducted, it was apparent that the Program mitigates the distress victim/witnesses have traditionally experienced throughout court proceedings. It has done so, many stated, by responding to a void in the criminal justice system.

The professional community surveyed also endorse the Program. Several community agencies suggested that the Program Coordinator taken on a greater "advocacy" role, however the Ministry has stated

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<sup>1</sup> Professionals in Etobicoke, Kingston, and Pembroke were interviewed in the spring evaluations.



that advocacy is not within the scope of the Program's mandate.

From the perspective of the police and Crown Attorney's interviewed, the Program results in more confident victim/witnesses who are better prepared to testify in court. Case preparation is also facilitated by the Program's knowledge of the victim/witnesses situation. Improved communication between the Crown, the victim/witness, and the criminal justice and community service representatives is also viewed as a key benefit of the Program. Community agencies also feel that the Program is making a tangible contribution to improve the treatment of domestic assault, sexual assault, and child abuse victims in particular.

The Victim/Witness Assistance Program is viewed by the professional community as a having considerable potential to contribute positively to the implementation of new policy, protocols and procedures arising from new legislation such as Bill C-15 and Bill C-89.

Operationally, several administrative matters concerning the Program's function and authority need to be clarified with the professional community. This finding should be viewed as a normal outcome of a developmental Program, and we are confident that the office of the Program Coordinator can respond to the matters raised.

There is also a demand to expand the Program's priority target group, and there is a demand to see expansion of the Program throughout Ontario.

Presently, however, it is also recognized by the professional community that the Program is operating beyond capacity, and therefore expansion cannot take place without increased resources. There is widespread acknowledgement among those surveyed that the Program's staff are overburdened: heavy caseloads, program promotion and development, recruitment, training and supervision of volunteers, and community agency liaison and public education cannot be handled adequately within the existing resource framework. We note that, although clients are still "very satisfied" with the service provided, it may prove difficult for Coordinators to maintain this level of service over the long term.

Resolution of the Program's resource situation, through funding stabilization and resource levels appropriate to the level of Program activity, is therefore critical. An activity-based time study is suggested as a means to provide concrete data from which the appropriate resource levels could be derived.

In conclusion, the opinion surveys suggest that there is strong support for further funding of the Program.



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## I. INTRODUCTION

### A. THE VICTIM/WITNESS ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

#### 1. Background

The Victim/Witness Assistance Program<sup>1</sup> was created by the Attorney General of Ontario, as a means of providing assistance and support to victims and witnesses of crimes who participate in criminal justice proceedings. The Program has been operating at 10 sites throughout Ontario on a pilot project basis. Under the general direction of the Provincial Victim/Witness Assistance Program Coordinator and local Crown Attorney offices, local Project Coordinators are developing a unique service which is designed to meet the needs of victim/witnesses in their particular court area.

The introduction of this Program in Ontario is seen as part of a major policy shift within the criminal justice system towards more responsive consideration of the needs of victims and witnesses of crime. Although the Program does not exclude any particular category of victim/witness, given the resources available to it, the Program operates on a priority system - those victim/witnesses believed most in need of court-based assistance. The priority clients of the Program are victim/witnesses of domestic assault; sexual assault; and child abuse. The Program therefore complements other legislative, inter-ministerial policy and provincial program initiatives<sup>2</sup>, in place, or emerging to deal with these particular crimes.

#### 2. Program Objectives

The goal of the Victim/Witness Assistance Program is:

"to enhance their [victim/witnesses] understanding of, and participation in the criminal justice process".

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<sup>1</sup> Referred to as "the Program" throughout this report.

<sup>2</sup> In particular, Bill C-15 and C-89, amendments to the Criminal Code concerning sexual assault, and the Ministry of the Attorney General's 1984 domestic assault prosecution policy directive.



Its specific aims are to:

- provide courtroom orientation;
- explain legal terminology;
- accompany victims to court;
- act as liaison on behalf of the victims with the police and Crown;
- refer victims to community agencies for counselling and other support services; and
- provide a public education and coordinating function for agencies and other governmental bodies within the community.

#### B. PROGRAM MONITORING AND EVALUATION

The implementation of the Victim/Witness Assistance Program has been monitored on several occasions. In early 1988, process evaluations of three sample sites (Etobicoke, Pembroke, and Kingston) were conducted by external consultants, and extensive recommendations for Program development and refinement were made<sup>3</sup>. It is our understanding that the Coordinator's Office is addressing those recommendations. Additionally, refinements were made to the client data collection mechanisms, with the view of streamlining the data collection process, and improving the quality of the data collection. Action has also been taken to ensure that all sites are fully functional.

In late 1988, two additional external studies of the Victim/Witness Assistance Program were conducted: 1. A client user satisfaction survey was conducted by Jamieson, Beals, Lalonde and Associates in collaboration with R.R. Ross Associates to elicit the client experience with and opinions on the service provided; 2. A survey of criminal justice and community professionals who interact with the service was conducted by Lee Axon to determine their opinions of it.

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<sup>3</sup> See: R.R. Ross Associates (March 31, 1988). A Process Evaluation of the Pembroke Victim/Witness Assistance Project; A Process Evaluation of the Kingston Victim/Witness Assistance Project; The Victim/Witness Assistance Program: Recommendations for Future Program Development; and, Axon, Lee (March 31, 1988). A Process Evaluation of the Etobicoke Victim/Witness Assistance Project.



### C. PURPOSE OF THIS REPORT

This report summarizes the findings of the latter two studies, which were conducted independently of each other. Supplementary documentation on both studies is available from Research Services, Ministry of the Attorney General.

### D. STRUCTURE OF THIS REPORT

The clients and professionals who interact with the Program view it from different perspectives. To the client, the key concerns centre on the nature and quality of service provided; the administrative details of how that service is delivered are relatively unimportant. Professionals, on the other hand, must not only endorse the Program's conceptual underpinnings, but also approve the quality of service provided and feel assured that the delivery mechanisms are effective.

Thus, the client user satisfaction survey and the professional opinion survey each focus on different aspects of the Program, although there are some elements of common concern. Consequently, this report is structured to provide a summary of each survey, followed by a general discussion of issues emerging for future program development.

### E. SURVEY LIMITATIONS

The Victim/Witness Assistance Program is designed to address victim/witnesses' needs for information on the criminal justice system, to offer them emotional support while they are involved in a criminal justice proceeding, and, where appropriate, to refer them to other community resources they may need. Client and professional opinions of the Program's services are, therefore, plausible indicators of the usefulness, appropriateness, and capability of the Program to address client needs for assistance. It also serves as a means of identifying ways to improve or enhance the Program.

Such opinion surveys are valuable tools in helping Program managers to develop a better service. Ultimately, it is the quality of the user's experience which counts. Opinion surveys do not, however, provide objective information on the Program's true "effectiveness" in meeting its objectives, for such surveys are based exclusively on perceptions. They measure perceived "customer" satisfaction with the service actually provided. The reader must bear in mind that what individuals think about what ought to be provided, and what the Program can actually deliver, can vary widely.

Professionals who interact with the Program share a behind the scenes view of the Program's delivery mechanisms, and therefore



provide a separate perspective on the Program's operations. Nevertheless professional opinion of the Program's services may also vary according to factors such as individual knowledge of the Program's purpose and structure, and the extent to which each respondent has accessed its services on behalf of his/her client group.

Finally, it should also be noted that although all Program sites operate under the same general guidelines, there is apparent variation in operating style and procedures among all sites examined. The quality of the facility, the Program's management and administrative procedures, caseload, use of volunteer resources, and the activity it emphasizes influence the nature of the service which is delivered. The opinion surveys, however, focus on concerns shared across Program sites, not site specific issues *per se*.



## II. THE CLIENT USER SATISFACTION SURVEY

### A. SURVEY OBJECTIVES

The objectives of the client user satisfaction survey were:

- to assess the degree of client satisfaction with services offered, and
- to identify areas which, from a client perspective, require improvement.

### B. METHODOLOGY

The survey was conducted on seven program sites: Etobicoke, Hamilton, Kingston, London, Ottawa, Pembroke, and Windsor. It was administered by four trained, female interviewers, all of whom were graduates of a university program in criminology. Clients were contacted by telephone, and interviewed using a Client Interview Guide which is contained in Appendix B.

A total of 164 telephone interviews were completed from a selected sample of 206 clients<sup>4</sup>, resulting in an overall response rate of eighty per cent. Of the 42 interviewees from the non-respondent group, thirty-three were deleted from the survey because several attempts to contact them failed, and one other was removed due to a language barrier between the interviewee and the interviewer. Of the remaining non-respondents, two clients refused to participate in the survey; an additional five were aware of the Program but claimed they had not used its services; and one individual claimed she had neither heard of the Program nor used its services.

Approximately one-third of the victim/witnesses receiving assistance were children. Almost one-half of these were under age twelve. Given the sensitive nature of the subject matter, and the obvious ethical and logistical difficulties in conducting child interviews, we opted to conduct the majority of child-related interviews with the parent or guardian of the child, who in effect had acted on behalf of the child's interests throughout the court proceeding. It should also be noted that this family member also derived benefit from the Program. There were three additional cases where three teenager victim/witnesses had indicated (with parental/guardian consent) a desire to speak to the interviewer.

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<sup>4</sup> The sample was selected by the Coordinators at each site, who were instructed by Research Services to select a sample which was representative of their Project's client base. Clients were first contacted by the Coordinator to establish their willingness to participate in the survey.



The data were analyzed using SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences). Several open-ended response categories were content analyzed.

## C. FINDINGS

### 1. Characteristics of the Respondent Group

A total of 164 interviews were conducted with the following categories of clients:

- 105 adult victim/witnesses (64 per cent);
- 1 adult witness (0.6 per cent);
- 55 guardians of child victim/witnesses or witnesses (33.5 per cent); and
- 3 teen-aged child victims (1.8 per cent).

The majority of the clients interviewed were female (143, or 87.2 per cent). Contrastingly, the vast majority of the accused were male (155; 94.5 per cent).

The victimization profile of the respondent group reflects the priority targeting which the Program has established. Almost half of all interviewees had been victims of domestic assault (75, or 45.7 per cent). Approximately one-third (55, or 33.5 per cent) involved cases of children who had been victims of child abuse (within and outside the family setting) or had witnessed a crime<sup>5</sup>. Twelve cases (7.3 per cent) involved sexual assault victimization. The remaining cases involved other kinds of victimization, such as break and enter and assault.

In three-quarters (122 or 74.5 per cent) of the cases, the criminal proceedings were completed, with the remaining quarter (42 cases) still in progress at the time the interview was conducted.

The majority of the interviewees (138, or 84.1 per cent) were involved for the first time as a victim/witness in a criminal court proceeding. Almost two-thirds indicated they had "no knowledge" (97;59.1 per cent) of the court process prior to their involvement as a victim/witness, and yet another third indicated they had "some knowledge" (57;34.8 per cent). Only 10 (6.1 per cent) claimed to have a "lot of knowledge" about court proceedings.

All but three claimed to be first-time users of the Victim/Witness Assistance Program services.

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<sup>5</sup> This figure includes sexual-related crimes against children.



## 2. Respondent Access to Program Assistance

To operate efficiently, the Program must rely on several methods to identify targeted clients. The police, the Crown's office, and community agencies are key referral agents for the Program. To examine the strength of the referral network, we asked respondents to identify the source from which they first heard about the Program.

Their responses suggest that the Program is evolving as a well-integrated community service, relying on court and police-based administrative systems, outreach and community referral mechanisms to develop its client base. Twenty-eight per cent of the interviewees claim to have first heard about the Program from a Program representative<sup>6</sup>. An additional 17.1 per cent first learned about the Program from the Crown's office. The police and community agencies are also assuming responsibilities for Program promotion and referral: approximately one-quarter (43, or 26.2 per cent) had first heard about the Program from the police, and the remaining 22.6 per cent (37) had heard about it through other community agencies, such as women's shelters, children's aid societies, and social services.

In over half (91, or 55.5 per cent) of the cases in our study sample, the Program was responsible for making the first contact with clients, which demonstrates the importance of the outreach component of the Program. But it should be noted that in 37.8 per cent of cases, the clients themselves contacted the Program<sup>7</sup>. This latter figure suggests that the promotional efforts of other key actors, on behalf of the Program, are having a positive impact in encouraging victim/witnesses to use the Program's services.

The degree and intensity of contact between the Program and the victim/witnesses it assists varies by the nature of the case and the extent to which assistance is required. From a client perspective, the important issue is that a representative of the Program is available when help is needed. The majority of victims (151, or 92.1 per cent) indicated that a representative of the Program was "always", or "most of the time" available when needed. Only a small minority (13; 7.9 per cent) indicated that they had difficulty contacting the Coordinator. Despite the heavy caseloads Program Coordinators face on a daily basis, it would appear they

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<sup>6</sup> It should be noted that Coordinators use internal referral mechanisms specifically tailored to the Program site (i.e. court dockets, police referrals, etc.)

<sup>7</sup> In many cases, it would be fair to assume this contact is made on the basis of information provided by key referral agencies.



are effectively accommodating client needs.

### 3. The Nature of Assistance Received

The nature and kinds of information and assistance clients receive varies according to the particulars of each case. We examined aspects of our data by victimization type, but did not find any particularly significant patterns in the types and range of assistance provided to domestic assault, sexual assault, child abuse or other categories of cases. Differences are discussed in the body of the text, below, where relevant.

It should also be noted that despite variations in the actual services offered by the Program<sup>8</sup>, there are core categories of assistance which most sites offer<sup>8</sup>. Our analysis focuses on these key categories.

#### a. General Information on Court Procedure

Of the 122 completed cases we examined, 92.6 per cent (113 cases) of the respondents indicated they had received an explanation of how the court system operates (7.4 per cent, or 9 cases had not received such information). Information on courtroom protocols was received in 92.6 per cent, or 113 of the cases (2 not applicable). Legal terms were also explained in 83.6 per cent (102) of the cases reviewed (14.8 per cent, or 18 did not receive such information; 2 not applicable).

Eight-seven per cent (106 cases) indicated that their rights as victim/witnesses had been explained (11.5 per cent, or 14 cases did not receive this information; 2 not applicable). Eighty-three percent (101 cases) indicated that their role in the process had been explained (15.6 per cent, or, 19 cases did not receive this information; 2 not applicable).

Of the 122 completed cases, 84.4 per cent (103) found the information provided "useful" or "very useful". Eleven per cent found the information "somewhat useful", and only a minority of three (2.5 per cent) found the information "not at all useful" (3 missing/not applicable).

Many of the clients involved in "in-progress" cases had not yet received all categories of information, however it is likely that

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<sup>8</sup> One exception to this is courtroom accompaniment. Of the 122 completed cases we dealt with, only half of the clients had been accompanied in the courtroom by a Program representative. As the volunteer component of the Program expands to all sites, it is likely that this will then become a more standardized service.



this information will be provided to them at the appropriate stages in their case, given the pattern of assistance demonstrated above.

b. Case Specific Information

The respondents also received specific information concerning their particular case. In 80.5 per cent (132) of the cases, the Program had also provided to the client information concerning the dates and times of court proceedings. Forty-five percent (74) indicated that the Program had also provided information on the status of the accused. The provision of this information to domestic assault, child abuse, and sexual assault victim/witnesses is increasingly recognized as an important Program service, and it would appear that the Program is making strides to ensure that this kind of information is available on a regular basis<sup>9</sup>.

The Program also serves an interpretive role to clients: 89 per cent (146) indicated that the Program had provided information to them on the meaning of court proceedings.

c. Referral to Community Agencies

Over half (55.5 per cent; 91) of the respondents indicated that the Program had provided them with information on additional community agencies which could be of assistance to them. It would appear that many of those who did not receive such information were at the time already aware of, or in contact with local agencies and hence had no need for such information.

Of those receiving information, 30.5 per cent (50) indicated they were actively assisted in contacting the required community agency. Many of those were willing to contact agencies on their own (or declined altogether), thus freeing Program Coordinators to focus on those individuals who did need help in reaching the proper community resources.

4. Satisfaction with Assistance Received

a. Satisfaction with Information Provided

One of the primary functions of the Program is to provide clients with information so that they understand (and therefore become more comfortable with) court procedures in which they will take part.

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<sup>9</sup> However, several community agency respondents dealing with domestic assault victims suggest there is a need to improve the relay of this information to the Program, and to the client, see Chapter III, Section C.4.a.



Approximately 85 per cent of all respondents felt that the information received from the Program was "useful", or "very useful" in helping them to understand, and anticipate court procedures. A small minority (3; 1.8 per cent) felt that the information was "not at all useful", while the remaining 16 (9.8 per cent) found the information which was provided "somewhat useful".

The Program is also mandated to ensure that victim/witnesses are kept abreast of developments regarding their case, including the times and dates of proceedings, the meaning of case-related proceedings, and so forth.

The vast majority (88.4 per cent; 145) felt they had received sufficient information on their case, and ninety-five percent (156) were "satisfied", or "very satisfied" with the way information was explained to them.

Respondents were asked to identify whatever they considered the first and second most important aspects of the Program. Interestingly, two-thirds of the respondents (66.5 per cent; 109) identified the emotional support offered as the most important aspect. The personalized nature of the service delivery is seen as a very humanizing element in a process viewed by many clients as overwhelmingly complex and impersonal. Key to this humanizing element is the Program Coordinator herself who is seen by many clients to personify the Program itself. The counselling and interpersonal skills, and the professional commitment which the Program Coordinators bring to the Program are therefore a key strength of the service provided.

The second most important aspect of the Program, to approximately two-thirds of the respondents, was case-related information and assistance. This includes information on the court process, information on the case specifically, and preparation for testifying in court.

b. Satisfaction with the Program's Role in Relation to the Crown Attorney's Office

One of the key features of the Victim/Witness Assistance Program is the mediating role it plays between the victim/witness and the Crown Attorney handling the case. Over 80 per cent of the clients interviewed found the Program helpful to them in relaying information to and from the Crown's office.

This aspect of the Program is particularly important, since over 80 per cent of the respondents indicated that they had "rare", "occasional", or "no contact" (18.9 per cent) with the Crown Attorney handling their case. Thus, the Program's role in helping



victim/witnesses is also mutually beneficial to the Crown Attorney preparing the case as it helps to ensure that the information is both current and accurate<sup>10</sup>. Domestic assault cases (which frequently entail a post-charge, on-going dynamic between victim and accused) and familial child abuse cases, especially benefit from Program/Crown contact.

It should also be noted that contrary to the Ministry directive which states that Crown Attorney's must meet personally with domestic assault victims, twelve domestic assault respondents (16 per cent of all domestic assault victim/witnesses interviewed) claimed they had not met personally with the Crown. It was not within the scope of this study, however, to verify respondent's claims or the particular circumstances surrounding these cases, and we cannot comment further on this issue.

It should be noted that despite the low level of contact with the Crown, over 70 per cent felt "satisfied", or "very satisfied", with the service received. This percentage is, however, lower in domestic assault related cases. Of the sixty-one completed cases observed, only 61 per cent of respondents felt "satisfied" or "very satisfied" with the Crown's office, while 39 per cent felt "dissatisfied", or very "dissatisfied"<sup>11</sup>.

### C. Satisfaction with the Program's Services

As indicated earlier, the degree of personal contact between the client and the Program is dependent on the nature of the case and the circumstance of the victim/witness. Over half (56.7 per cent; 93 cases) of the respondents indicated that they had "frequent" or "very frequent" personal contact with the Program Coordinator, while one-third (34.1 percent; 56 cases) felt they had only "occasional" contact. The few remaining respondents (9.1 per cent, or 15 cases) indicated they had only "rare" contact.

However, despite the variance in intensity of service received, the vast majority (95 per cent) of respondents were "satisfied", or "very satisfied", with the specific service received from the Program.

A solid measure of "customer" satisfaction is whether the "customer" would use the service again. Ninety-six per cent of the respondents indicated that they would use the Program's service

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<sup>10</sup> See Chapter III, C.3.

<sup>11</sup> It is important to note that this survey does not provide sufficient information for us to comment further on the source, or cause of dissatisfaction.



again if they needed to, and 97 per cent indicated they would refer others to it. Several indicated that they had already referred others to the service. These findings indicate the high degree of support for the concept of victim/witness assistance held among victim/witnesses themselves.

d. Impact on the Victim/Witnesses Court Experience

Although the Program routinely prepares clients for the procedure of testifying, at the time of the telephone interview, only fifty-four per cent (89) of those interviewed had, in fact, testified. Eighty-nine per cent of those stated that they felt "more comfortable" than they would have been had they not been briefed on the procedure by the Program representative. Moreover, 65.9 per cent (108) felt that the Program's assistance "made a lot of difference", and 18.3 per cent (30) felt it made "some difference" in helping them to understand what transpired in the courtroom.

e. Impact on Knowledge and Understanding of the Criminal Justice Process

Over eighty per cent (133) of the respondents felt that the Program's assistance had improved their knowledge of the criminal justice process, while 7.3 per cent (12) were "unsure" and 9.8 per cent (16) felt it had "no impact" (3 respondents declined comment). Yet it must be understood that it is difficult to separate the impact of the Program's assistance from the actual experience itself. Nevertheless, there is a sentiment evident in many of the respondents' comments which suggests that they are more accepting of the process - and outcome - than they feel they would have been had the supportive arm of the Program not existed.

One of the Program's faiths is that by offering a humanized service, it will foster (where warranted) greater public support for criminal prosecutions. Yet it is difficult to "measure" whether the existence of the Victim/Witness Program will result, ultimately, in greater willingness amongst citizens to report crimes and to participate cooperatively in criminal prosecutions. While two-thirds of the respondents indicated that they would be more willing to report crimes, knowing this sort of assistance would be available to them, many qualified their answers with comments such as "it would depend on the circumstances [of the crime]".

Nevertheless, it is clear that the Program is easing the criminal justice process for those who do choose to report crime to police. Many respondents stated that they "couldn't have gone through it" [the proceeding] without the assistance of the Program. Several domestic assault victims indicated they felt greater confidence



proceeding with the charge than they would have without the Program's support. As a result, they may be more willing to proceed if future incidents arise. In this sense, it is reasonable to conclude that the Program is helping to facilitate smoother cooperation by victim/witnesses, and to create a real sense of 'fairer treatment for victim/witnesses.

#### D. CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS FOR PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT

##### 1. Filling the Gap

The client user satisfaction survey has demonstrated that the Program is well supported by the victim/witnesses who have accessed its services. Domestic assault, sexual assault, and child abuse victims have particularly benefitted from this service. It is our contention that this service has thereby facilitated the implementation of new policy associated with the criminal justice process in these cases.

Throughout the interviews we conducted, it was apparent that the Program had mitigated the distress victim/witnesses have traditionally experienced through court proceedings. It has done so by responding to a void in the system, which in the past almost entirely neglected their needs.

##### 2. Program Improvements

The respondents had only minimal comments with respect to Program improvement. Many of their frustrations, were in fact directed at matters outside the Program's control, such as trial delay, and sentencing related issues. But it was apparent to many that the Program Coordinator was overburdened. Interestingly, many of the respondents empathised with the Program Coordinator's situation, and expressed a desire to see the Program's resource base expanded. Given the inherent limitations of this kind of survey, we cannot offer comment on how the Program's resource base should be improved, however, we suggest that a combination of additional staffing, and enhanced use of volunteers be explored. We suggest that a time study of the present staff and volunteer activity be undertaken in order to gauge what level of resources would be required to operate all aspects of the Program.

It should also be noted that victim/witnesses who do not fall within the priority target group definition have also derived important benefits from the Program. In this study, they represented 17 per cent of the Program's clientele. Although they are presently few in numbers, there is a suggestion that there is a wider clientele for the Program (although it is possible that their needs may be tailored differently than those within the priority categories). Presently, however, the Program's resources



are not equipped to deal with an increased target group. We suggest that Program Managers proceed cautiously, and only as resources permit, as recommended in earlier reports to the Ministry<sup>12</sup>.

### 3. A Final Word

As one victim of domestic assault stated:

..."Without the Program, I would have been very lost".

In conclusion, this survey has focused on the opinions of clients who have received service. We cannot empirically comment on whether the Program makes a 'critical difference' to the experience of victim/witnesses. That kind of information could be only obtained from a comparative study of victim/witnesses receiving the service, versus, victim/witnesses who do not. But the respondents' comments attest to the Program's positive impact in comforting and reassuring victim/witnesses. As a result it appears to have earned a stable place within the criminal justice system.

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<sup>12</sup> R.R. Ross and Associates. "The Victim/Witness Assistance Program: Recommendations for Future Program Development", March 31, 1988.



### III. THE PROFESSIONAL OPINION SURVEY

#### A. SURVEY OBJECTIVES

The Victim/Witness Assistance Program interacts with many other criminal justice and community service professionals, such as: Crown Attorneys, the Police, Court Officials, Women's services (shelters, advocacy groups), and children's services. The effective functioning of the Program is, in fact, premised on this interdependency.

Professional satisfaction with the Program's services, is therefore important to the Program's ability to respond to its client's needs.

Thus, the objective of the professional opinion survey conducted by Axon was to:

- assess the degree of satisfaction of justice/social services professionals with the Program's services.

#### B. METHODOLOGY

Open-ended interviews with Crown Attorneys, the Police, Community agency officials, and the Project Coordinators were conducted to obtain their perceptions of the Program. A combined approach of in-person and telephone interviews was used. The contact and issues addressed are listed in Appendix C.

#### C. FINDINGS

##### 1. General Comments

Overall, the interviewees are supportive, in principle, of the Program's function and its continuation. Many of their comments echo those of clients: victim/witnesses who use the service appear better prepared to handle courtroom proceedings and to cope with the stresses associated with victimization. The professionals interviewed believe the Program has filled a gap in the system which would otherwise be left unattended. Moreover, there is a belief that the Program will ultimately encourage and support victims who have traditionally been reluctant to become involved in criminal justice proceedings.

Their impressions of the service delivery, while generally positive, appear shaped by differing needs and expectations of what ought to be delivered to victim/witnesses, and by their knowledge of what the Program can, in fact, be expected to provide.



The sections below highlight each of the following categories of respondents' comments:

- the Police
- Crown Attorneys
- Community Agencies
- Program Coordinators

## 2. Police Response

Overall, police response to the Program is positive. The major benefits they perceive for victim/witnesses are that they are better prepared to testify in court, and they are more readily provided information concerning their case. The "sanctuary" feature of separate waiting facilities for victim/witnesses was also viewed as an important aspect of the Program.

From an operational perspective, police interviewees indicated that the Program provides a service unavailable elsewhere within the criminal justice system. It was their impression that police officers presently have neither the time, nor the expertise to provide adequate assistance and support to victim/witnesses. Interestingly, support for the Program was as strong amongst police forces with specialized crisis units (such as child abuse or domestic assault units), as among those without. There is a general belief that the Program is "invaluable" in helping victims - in particular victims of domestic assault, child abuse, and sexual assault - to overcome their distrust and fear of the criminal justice process.

There is general support amongst the police officers interviewed, for the Program's continuation and its expansion into other jurisdictions.

Several issues relating to Program improvement emerged in the course of the police interviews. While the police respondents acknowledged that Coordinators are presently overextended in their duties, they also advocated greater expansion of the Program's client base to more systematically encompass victims of non-priority offenses (such as burglary), who may have difficulty handling the stress of courtroom procedures (for example, immigrant victims, the elderly). As noted earlier in this report, the Office of the Provincial Coordinator has indicated that the Program's design does not presently exclude any victim/witness - but given available resources, it must prioritize the provision of assistance to those deemed most needy.

Police also perceive a need to clarify police and Program responsibilities on several administrative matters, including the preparation of Victim Impact Statements and witness fees. In



response, the Provincial Coordinator's office has stated that these responsibilities are clearly delineated, and the responsibility lies with the police and Crown staff. However, the Program Coordinator will assist in these matters, as necessary.

### 3. Crown Attorney Response

The Crown Attorneys interviewed expressed full support for, and satisfaction with the Program, with one exception (he claimed he would prefer that the resources be used to acquire another Crown Counsel). The general perception is that the courtroom orientation and improved familiarity with the legal process which witnesses acquire as a result of the Program, produces less nervous, more confident, and better briefed witnesses who are capable of giving stronger, and more credible testimony.

The Program's major operational benefits, as perceived by the Crown Attorneys interviewed, relate to greater efficiency in case preparation. Specifically the Program saves the Crown Attorney time by arranging all necessary appointments with victim/witnesses. In many instances, the Program Coordinator is able to elicit pertinent background information from the victim/witness's perspective, and is able to keep abreast of any changes in the victim/witness's situation prior to, and during the trial itself.

The Crown Attorney respondents further commented on the Program's utility in assisting them to carry through the Attorney General's domestic assault directive. The Coordinator's interpersonal and counselling skills are regarded as a valuable asset in explaining the Ministry's position to the victim and ensuring her cooperation throughout the proceeding. Moreover, with respect to the implementation of Bill C-15, it was indicated that there will be an even greater need for the assistance and advice of the Victim/Witnesses Coordinator in dealing with child victim/witnesses.

Generally, Crown Attorneys regard the Program's operational linkage to the Crown's office as an important structural feature. Open and immediate communication with the Crown, it is felt, helps to ensure that the Program and the Crown's office work as a team.

At site locations which use volunteers, Crown Attorney's expressed satisfaction with the volunteer effort.

The referral mechanisms vary throughout the Program sites, and it was not within the scope of this study to assess the relative merits of the methods used. Some respondents did suggest that referral procedures could be refined to ensure that all victim/witnesses requiring assistance are identified, however, the nature of improvements required needs to be examined on a site



specific basis. Moreover, the fact that the Program Coordinators are overburdened (which the Crown Attorney respondents recognized) may override the ability of the Program to respond to the needs of a wider clientele than it presently accommodates.

Overall, the Crown Attorney respondents are very pleased with the Program and support its continuation. A number indicated the Program should receive permanent funding to ensure that consistent and professional service is provided.

#### 4. Community Agencies Responses

The community agency respondents also expressed support for the Program. Social service workers indicated that the Program helps to address the unrealistic hopes and misconceptions crime victims have about the criminal justice system.

Another benefit of the Program is referral spin-off to community agencies. The Program Coordinator serves, in many respects, as a "broker" for other community services available to victims. This feature is particularly important in communities lacking police Victim Crisis Units, or shelters.

Community agencies expressed two viewpoints with respect to the Program's close alignment with the Crown's Office. To some it is felt the Program's location within the Crown's office assures the Program's credibility, and facilitates communication between community agencies and the Crown Attorneys. Moreover, they believe Program's access to information concerning the victim/witnesses case, and the expertise Program officials offer on court procedures yields a more complete service than could be delivered through an independent, community agency structure.

On the other hand, some community agency respondents believe that the Program's present administrative location jeopardizes the independence and authority of the Coordinator to act on behalf of the victim/witnesses. According to this viewpoint, the Program would be more appropriately structured so that the Program Coordinator could act as an impartial ombudsman, with authority to oversee both Crown and defence counsel's treatment of victim/witnesses. It should, however, be noted that the Office of the Program Coordinator has stated that it is not the Ministry's intention to provide an advocacy function through this Program.

Some community agency respondents expressed concern that immigrant crime victims were not receiving adequate assistance, and they noted that greater outreach was required for these types of victims. Recognizing that under the present resource structure, the Program is already overextended, they suggest that increased funding would enable the Program to address immigrant needs more



fully. It should be noted that the Ministry is translating the Program's brochure into five languages in an attempt to reach out to immigrant victim/witnesses and explain the services the Program provides.

Highlights of each community agency sector's comments on the Program, are provided below.

a. Children's Agencies

The representatives of children's agencies interviewed are fully supportive of the Program, and its continuation. One of the most useful features of the Program for child victim/witnesses is the sanctuary of the separate waiting room, particularly in cases where children have to wait long hours for court appearances. The humanizing quality of the Program is seen as particularly beneficial, not only for the child but the family as well.

From an agency perspective, the improved contact with the Crown which the Program provides is also beneficial. However, it was also noted by some respondents that more Crown involvement in child-related cases, facilitated by the Program Coordinator, would be helpful.

Although child agency respondents recognized that the Program cannot offer legal advice to its clients, it was suggested that the Program could provide legal aid chits to those requiring advice. It is suggested that this issue might best be addressed by the Ontario Legal Aid Plan.

b. Battered Women's Agencies

The representatives of battered women's agencies interviewed are supportive of the Program, and believe that it has helped improve protection for battered women. The direct benefits perceived for women include: the sanctuary of the waiting room, greater consistency in court contact, and more information about court procedures.

The Program's referral process has also had spin-off effects in disseminating information on their agencies' services. The Program's volunteer component (where operational) has also relieved them of the necessity to provide court accompaniment service to battered women victim/witnesses.

It is also believed that the Program has had an educational impact upon Crown Attorneys. The respondents believe that official intervention in wife assault cases is an integral part of helping battered women come to terms with their situation. They believe that this position is now better understood by Crown Attorneys. As



part of the inter-ministerial initiative on domestic violence, the Program has thus made a positive contribution to this new attitude towards victims of domestic violence.

Several concerns about the Program's structure and delivery mechanisms were raised by the battered women's agencies respondents. First, it was felt by several that the Program's priority target groups could be widened, and that the Program could be better publicized. It was also felt that follow-up with battered women clients should also be increased, and that the Program could more effectively liaise with probation officers, post-sentence, to ensure that the victim/witnesses accurate information on the status of, and constraints on, the offender. Respondents also expressed the need for clarification of the Coordinator's role (if any) with respect to cases which are being plea-bargained.

#### c. Sexual Assault Clinics

Respondents from sexual assault clinics indicated that the Program has improved the courtroom experience for sexually assaulted women. Specifically, the courtroom orientation, the support offered by Program staff, and the waiting room sanctuaries are particularly helpful. But they also suggested that greater publicity for the Program, and an extended outreach activity, are required.

A number of improvements were also suggested regarding victim/witness and Crown contact, and victim/witness and police contact. Specifically, the respondents would like to see earlier, and more lengthy contact between the victim and the Crown handling the case, and they would like to see victims receive improved information about the status of the case and explanations of dispositions. They would also like to see victims receive more information about their legal options when their statements are taken by the police, and more emotional support overall.

Many of the improvements mentioned are outside the scope of the Program's authority. It should be noted, however, that the new inter-ministerial sexual assault initiative will address these concerns. As part of this initiative, an assistant Crown Attorney now serves as Ministry of the Attorney General representative on the Sexual Assault Committee associated with the initiative.

#### d. Private Lawyers

Private lawyers interviewed also expressed support for the Program. Two concerns were raised by some of them about the Program. From a structural perspective, they voiced the opinion that the Program, as a publicly funded initiative, should be more readily available



to defence witnesses<sup>13</sup>. Secondly, they stated that they had experienced difficulties contacting Program Coordinators, due to the latter's busy schedules<sup>14</sup>.

##### 5. Program Coordinators Responses

As noted earlier in this document, each site's Program facility and operating procedures vary, however, the Program Coordinators share several areas of common concern. The major concern of all Program Coordinators interviewed is that they are overextended. Because of the case load level, many are finding the that community liaison and public relation activities associated with the Program must be taken on after-hours. Several Program sites have developed volunteer corps to assist them in activities such as operating information booths, court accompaniment, and basic information dissemination. This volunteer activity helps to alleviate the pressures Coordinators face, but it was also noted that recruiting, training, and organizing of volunteers is also a time-consuming effort.

Employment security is also a concern, and it is the general view of the Program Coordinators, that the funding base for the Program should be stabilized. Program Coordinators would also like to see further opportunities for professional training and development.

At two sites, the Coordinators indicated that improvements to their referral systems are required. The Office of the Program Coordinator is aware of this situation, and it is hoped that the new procedures manual will provide assistance to Coordinators in refining their referral procedures.

#### D. EMERGING ISSUES FOR PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT

Generally, there is widespread support for the Victim/Witness Assistance Program's continuation, and expansion. The professional users interviewed indicated that there is a wide range of Program benefits - both to victim/witnesses, and to the administrative elements which comprise the criminal justice system and community agency network.

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<sup>13</sup> Note: the Program Coordinator's office indicates that assistance is provided to defence witnesses, when a need is demonstrated, however defence witnesses are not a priority group on a regularized basis,

<sup>14</sup> Coordinators have answering machines to record calls when they are not available, however it would appear that this is not felt satisfactory by some professionals accessing the service.



There are, however, some areas of concern, which revolve around four central issues - the need for:

- further clarification on the Program's structure and function;
- communication to the field, on the Program's structure and function, and delivery mechanisms;
- resolution of the problem of the Program's overextended resource situation; and
- further Program development to face new Program challenges.

These issues are dealt with, below.

#### 1. Clarification on the Program's Structure

Following earlier evaluations of the Program, the Office of the Provincial Coordinator has made efforts to consolidate the Program's structure. It is understood that many of the comments made by professional users focus on problems which already have been identified, or are issues about which the Office of the Provincial Coordinator is already aware. Nevertheless, the opinion survey leaves the impression that there still appears a need to clarify certain aspects of the Coordinator's administrative role (and appropriate protocols) in preparing, handling, and disseminating case related information, including information on court dates, victim/impact statements, dispositions, bail, probation, and restraining orders, etc.).

The issue of whether the Program should be available to defence witnesses, which is also discussed in previous evaluations, also requires clarification.

On-going clarification and refinement we suggest, is a normal process in the course of Program development to which managers must respond. In this respect, it should also be recognized that the Program's structure must be mediated by the resources available to it. This is discussed below, under issue 3.

#### 2. Communication with the Professional Field

It should be recognized that the office of the Provincial Coordinator has undertaken a number of initiatives this past year to streamline and enhance the Program's delivery mechanisms, of which several are still in progress. For example, many of the



issues raised regarding referral procedures will be addressed in the Ministry's newly created procedures manual. The Program is also attempting to improve outreach to immigrant groups.

It would appear that many of the frustrations with the Program expressed by the professional community are based on raised or erroneous expectations of what the Program can deliver, given its mandate and available resources. These issues could be clarified with these agencies through open dialogue and consultation amongst the various "stake-holders" involved with the Program.

It is suggested that the office of the Provincial Program Coordinator take the necessary steps to ensure that communication with community professionals is undertaken on a regular basis, so that they are kept up-to-date on recent Program refinements and developments. This would also help to ensure that the professional community's expectations of the Program are realistic, and in line with the Ministry's intent in creating this program. The office of the Program Coordinator has indicated that staff training sessions, as well as Program promotion sessions held with community agencies have, in the past, served as an open forum to raise and discuss Program and community-related issues. It is suggested that as resources permit, this kind of activity could be undertaken more frequently.

### 3. Resolution of the Program's Over-extended Resource Situation

Many of the criticisms of the Program's delivery mechanisms can be attributed to the view that the Victim/Witness Coordinators are overextended. As a result, there is concern that coordinators will experience a high burn-out rate if they are not provided with additional assistance, and if their caseloads remain at present levels. Furthermore, because the Program's resource base is not secure, there is a great deal of anxiety amongst staff, which affects morale overall. However, it should be noted that during the fiscal year 88/89, the Program did receive permission to expand four part-time sites to full-time. Also, secretaries were added to those sites which did not already have one.

Moreover, there is an undercurrent of concern that the quality of assistance provided to clients may suffer in the long term. Some respondents share an ever-present concern that there are additional victim/witnesses needing assistance who will not, as a result of the Program's limited capacity, receive help.



As noted in earlier reports to the Ministry<sup>15</sup>, the Program may follow two options to resolve this issue: expand the resources available to reasonable levels, based on a systematic projection of project activity, or restrict Project activities. A blend of these options is also possible. Given the widespread support for the Program, it does not seem feasible for the Program to further limit its target group; indeed, the majority of the respondents would like to see further expansion of the Program. Many respondents would also like to see the Ministry increase present staff levels within existing Programs. Finally, developing new Programs in other locations throughout Ontario is supported by the professional respondents.

#### 4. New Challenges

The Victim/Witness Assistance Program is a dynamic program which, in its very essence, must be well-tuned to the complex arena in which it operates. For example, the on-going implementation of Bill C-15, and the implementation of Bill C-89 will affect the operation of this Program in direct, and indirect ways. The importance of involving the Provincial Coordinator office in developing Ministerial response to this legislation and the practical examination of these issues by the ministerial committees involved in managing implementation needs to be underlined.

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<sup>15</sup> See R.R. Ross Associates, "The Victim/Witness Assistance Program: Recommendations for Future Program Development", March 31, 1988, p 13.



#### IV. FINAL COMMENTS AND CONCLUSIONS

The two independent surveys described in this report indicate clearly that the Victim/Witness Assistance Program is fully accepted within the criminal justice environment it presently serves.

##### **1. Program Development Issues**

As with any new Program, however, there are several areas which will require further refinement as the Program becomes firmly situated within the system. We anticipate that the Office of the Program Coordinator will be able to deal with the technical and administrative-related issues which have emerged from these surveys. But there is a larger issue which must first be addressed concurrently: resources.

Presently, Program Coordinators appear to be operating at full capacity, a fact which is acknowledged by the Program Coordinators' professional associates. Effective community liaison, Program promotion, and volunteer recruitment and training are amongst the activities which Program Coordinators have had to limit or defer in order to get the main job done: assisting victim/witnesses. Yet these activities are an integral part of the Program design, and in the long run this compromise is not effective. We suggest, therefore, that the Program is now sitting at a critical juncture, wherein it must find a means to increase its resource base, or revise its activities. A work load/time study would be useful to determine the appropriate level of funding required, given the Program's range of activities.

##### **2. Resource Stabilization and Expansion**

To date, the Victim/Witness Assistance Program has operated on a pilot project basis. It is the general view amongst the professional community surveyed that the Program has now matured to the degree that it requires the Ministry's commitment to a stable funding base. With this commitment, the Program would be better positioned to respond to the new challenges it will face as the demand for its service grows.

The surveys did not deal directly with the issue of Program expansion, however many professional users and clients indicate their support for further expansion of the Program, to other court locations. It is suggested that the Ministry examine the feasibility of this expansion, as a means of providing more equitable services to victim/witnesses across Ontario.



### **3. Further Research and Evaluation**

The Ministry has taken steps to collect Program client data on an on-going basis, which can feed into a continuous monitoring effort.

The opinion surveys which have been conducted have provided the Ministry with an immediate reading of the Program's impact in terms of client experience, as well as its impact upon work processes within other elements of the criminal justice system and the community service network. But there is also a need for a long-term evaluation strategy, as the Program evolves and (where required) addresses new issues, such as the impact of legislation such as Bill C-15 and C-89, Program expansion, and so forth.

As recommended in earlier reports, we therefore urge the Ministry to develop a long-term evaluation plan for this Program, pending resource stabilization.



**APPENDIX A**

**VICTIM/WITNESS ASSISTANCE PROGRAM**

**CLIENT RECORD ANALYSIS**

**(Ministry of the Attorney General, Research Services)**



## VICTIM/WITNESS ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

### CLIENT RECORD ANALYSIS

The information presented here was derived from 515 Client Record forms collected over the period from July-September, 1988.

#### THE CLIENTS

Age: The mean age of the clients was 28 years, with a range from 2 to 86 years.

one quarter (25.2%, 130) were under 18 years of age; five percent (5.0%, 26) were under 10 years of age; 2.5% were aged 66 years or older.

Sex: The vast majority of the clients (84.9%, 437) were females; 15.1% (78) were males. The sex of both the client and the accused was known in 510 cases, for 433 females and 77 males. In 415 of the female cases (95.8%) the accused was male; in 68 of the male cases (88.3%) the accused was also male.

Status: The clients were almost all victims or victim/witnesses (439, 85.4%); others were witnesses only or were parents of victims.

Relationship to accused: The relationship to the accused was known in 479 cases, for 417 females and 62 males. Over one-third of the female clients were wives of the accused (including common-law); a further 13.7% were divorced or separated wives. The following table illustrates the relationships of female clients to the accused:

	<u>n</u>	<u>%</u>
wife	151	36.2
divorced/separated	57	13.7
girlfriend/ex-girlfriend	49	11.8
mother/daughter/sister	41	9.8
friend/neighbour/acquaint.	61	18.9
stranger	25	6.0
other relationship	33	7.9
	<u>417</u>	<u>100.0</u>



For the male clients, almost half were friends/neighbours/acquaintances of the accused and almost one quarter (22.5%, 14) were fathers/sons/brothers of the accused:

	n	%
husband	4	6.5
father/son/brother	14	22.5
friend/neighbour/acquaint.	28	45.2
stranger	9	14.5
other relationship	7	11.3
	<u>62</u>	<u>100.0</u>

### THE CHARGES

A total of 775 charges were laid. The largest proportion were assault charges, accounting for 37.2% (288) of the total. Sexual assault charges made up a further 16.9% (131) of all charges. Other offence types included: murder/attempted murder (2.1%, 16); threatening (7.2%, 56); other sexual offences, including sexual interference, incest, indecent assault (5.5%, 43).

### DOMESTIC VIOLENCE CASES:

Over half the cases (54.0%, 278) were domestic violence matters, and the charges laid in these cases accounted for 54.8% (425) of the total number of charges. However, the type of charge in these cases differed from the sample as a whole. While assault charges made up more than one-third (37.2%, 288) of all charges, they constituted over half (53.6%, 228) of domestic violence charges. Sexual assault charges made up 16.9% (131) of all charges and just 4.0% (17) of domestic violence charges.

The relationship to the accused was known in 273 domestic violence cases, and of these wives and divorced/separated wives constituted almost three-quarters of the total (73.2%, 200). Current and ex-girlfriends made up another 16.1% (44) of the cases.

There were 276 dependents involved in these cases; the exact nature of the dependent relationship was unknown.

There was a finding of guilty in 51 of the domestic violence cases. The dispositions in these cases included: 16 fines ranging from \$200-\$1,000, with a median of \$300; 30 probation terms ranging from 2-36 months, with a median of 12 months; 15 jail terms ranging from 1 day to 2 years less 1 day (the maximum provincial term), with a median of 90 days. Seven men were ordered to attend batterers' groups.



### CHILD ABUSE CASES:

One-quarter of the cases (24.1%, 124) were child abuse matters: 104 sexual abuse, 14 physical abuse and 6 both sexual and physical. There were 98 female clients (79.0%) and 26 males (21.0%). Only 2 of the accused were female.

The average age of the clients in these cases was 12 years, with a range from 2-49 years. Clients aged 30 years or over were generally witnesses of an abuse. Younger clients were victims or victim/witnesses, including a 20-year old female with a history of abuse by her brother and a 25-year old male whose father was charged with a sexual offence.

There were 101 accused involved with these clients; their average age was 37 years, with a range from 15-77 years.

The relationship to the accused was known for 120 clients:

	<u>n</u>	<u>%</u>
son/daughter	31	25.9
close relative	15	12.5
baby-sitter/sitter's husband	16	13.3
known acquaintance (landlord, family friend, etc)	26	21.7
unspecified acquaintance	21	17.5
stranger	11	9.2
	<u>120</u>	<u>100.0</u>

There were 179 charges laid in these child abuse cases. More than half (55.3%, 99) were sexual assault charges, and a further 16.8% (30) were other sexual offences such as incest, indecent assault and sexual interference. There were two charges of attempted murder and 18 of assault, accounting for 11.2% of the charges.



## SERVICES PROVIDED

The Victim/Witness Coordinators provided the following services to their clients:

	<u>n</u>	<u>% (1)</u>
Courtroom Site Orientation	155	30.1
General Information on Criminal Justice System	465	90.3
Met with Crown and Victim in Joint Session	92	17.9
Provided Brochures	205	39.8
Discussed Ministry Policy	174	33.8
(2) Other Service	244	47.4

(1) percentages refer to the proportion of 515 clients receiving this service; clients may have received more than one type of service.

(2) includes: referrals to agencies, treatment centres, women's shelters, etc.; emotional support; liaison with Crown, police, CAS, etc.; sending probation order information, Peace Bond information, etc. to client.



## **APPENDIX B**

### **CLIENT USER SATISFACTION INTERVIEW GUIDE**

**(R.R. Ross Associates and Jamieson, Beals, Lalonde & Associates)**



CLIENT INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

MINISTRY OF THE ATTORNEY GENERAL OF ONTARIO  
VICTIM/WITNESS ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

SITE: \_\_\_\_\_

CASE NUMBER: \_\_\_\_\_

I N T E R -  
VIEWER: \_\_\_\_\_

INTERVIEWEE IS: (Enter appropriate number) [ ]

1. ADULT VICTIM/WITNESS
2. ADULT WITNESS ONLY
3. GUARDIAN OF CHILD VICTIM/WITNESS
4. GUARDIAN OF CHILD WITNESS ONLY
5. CHILD VICTIM : Age \_\_\_\_\_
6. CHILD WITNESS: Age \_\_\_\_\_

CLIENT VICTIM/WITNESS IS: 1. FEMALE

[ ]

2. MALE

TYPE OF CASE: [ ]

1. DOMESTIC ASSAULT
2. SEXUAL ASSAULT
3. CHILD ABUSE - WITHIN FAMILY CONTEXT
4. CHILD ABUSE - OUTSIDE FAMILY CONTEXT
5. OTHER: \_\_\_\_\_

STATUS OF CASE: 1. CASE COMPLETED [ ]

2. CASE IN PROGRESS

ACCUSED IS: 1. FEMALE [ ]

2. MALE

IF CASE INVOLVES A CHILD VICTIM/WITNESS:

APPROXIMATE AGE OF THE CHILD AT THE TIME OF TRIAL: \_\_\_\_\_



\*1. Have you (Has your daughter or son) ever been a victim/witness in a criminal court proceeding prior to this incident? [ ]

1. YES: WHEN: \_\_\_\_\_

NATURE OF CASE: \_\_\_\_\_

2. NO: IF NO, PROCEED TO QUESTION 3.

\*2. Is this case the first time you've (your son/daughter) used the services of the Victim/Witness Assistance Program? [ ]

1. YES  
2. NO

#### ACCESS TO THE PROGRAM

3. How did you first find out about the Victim/Witness Assistance Program? Did you hear about it first from: [ ]

1. The Victim/Witness Assistance Program?
2. The Crown Attorney?
3. The Victim/Witness Assistance Program and the Crown Attorney?
4. The Police?
5. Other: (specify) \_\_\_\_\_
6. Doesn't know

4. Were you first contacted by a representative of the Victim/Witness Assistance Program, or did you contact them? [ ]

1. Contacted by a rep of Victim/Witness Assistance Program
2. Client contacted the Victim/Witness Assistance Program
3. Doesn't know
4. Other

5. Were you able to get in touch with a representative of the Victim/Witness Assistance Program when you needed information? [ ]

1. Always
2. Most of the time
3. Some of the time
4. Rarely
5. Never



## INFORMATION ON CRIMINAL JUSTICE PROCEDURES

\*6. Did the anyone from the V/W Program explain to you (your son/daughter) how the court system operates?

1. Yes
2. No

\*7a. What kinds of information did you (your daughter/son) receive from the Victim/Witness Assistance Program on the criminal justice process:

Received?

	Yes	No
1. Your rights as a victim/witness	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. The meaning of legal terms	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. What would happen in the courtroom (protocols and procedures)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. Tour of the courtroom where your case would be heard	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5. Your role as a witness in the proceedings	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

\*7b. In general, how useful was this information to you (son/daughter):

1. Not at all useful
2. Somewhat useful
3. Useful
4. Very useful

Comments: \_\_\_\_\_

\*8a. What kinds of information did you receive from the Victim/Witness Program on your (son's/daughter's) case specifically:

(Check the appropriate category)

1. Information concerning the accused (whereabouts, special conditions concerning contact with the victim, etc.)
2. Dates, times, locations of court appearances
3. The meaning of the court proceedings
4. The final result of the proceedings
5. Other (Specify) \_\_\_\_\_



8b. Looking back on your case, did you receive enough information on the case from the Victim/Witness Assistance Program? [ ]

1. Yes
2. No

IF NO: What kinds of information didn't you receive that you felt you needed or that you felt you needed more of?

Comment: \_\_\_\_\_

8c. \*Were you satisfied with the way this information was explained to you (your son/daughter) by representatives of the Victim/Witness Program? [ ]

(enter only one response)

1. Very Dissatisfied
2. Dissatisfied
3. Satisfied
4. Very Satisfied

\*9. How would you describe the amount of personal/telephone contact you've (and your son/daughter) had with the Crown Attorney handling your case? [ ]

1. rare
2. occasional
3. frequent
4. very frequent
5. no contact

10. All things considered, were you satisfied with the treatment you received from the Crown Attorney's office? [ ]

1. Very Dissatisfied
2. Dissatisfied
3. Satisfied
4. Very Satisfied

Comment: \_\_\_\_\_



11. How helpful was the Victim Witness Assistance Program to you, in dealing with the Crown Attorney? [ ]

1. Very helpful
2. Somewhat helpful
3. Not very helpful
4. Not at all helpful

Comment: \_\_\_\_\_

12. How would you describe the amount of personal/telephone contact you've had with the Victim/Witness Assistance Representative during your case? [ ]

1. rare
2. occasional
3. frequent
4. very frequent

Comment: \_\_\_\_\_.

\*13. All things considered, were you satisfied with the service provided to you (your daughter/son) by the Victim/Witness Assistance Program office? [ ]

1. Very Dissatisfied
2. Dissatisfied
3. Satisfied
4. Very Satisfied

Comment: \_\_\_\_\_.

\*14. Did anyone from the Victim/Witness Program help prepare [ ] you (your daughter/son) to present your testimony in court?

1. Yes
2. No

\*15. Did anyone from the Victim/Witness Program accompany you [ ] (your daughter/son) in the courtroom when you were expected to testify?

1. Never
2. " Occasionally
3. Frequently
4. Always (Note: number of times \_\_\_\_\_)



\*16. Did you (your son/daughter) actually testify in court? [ ]

1. Yes
2. No

\* IF YES to the above question, how did you (your daughter/son) feel about testifying:

Do you think the information and help you received from the V/W Assistance Program made a difference in the way you (your son/daughter) felt emotionally when testifying? Did you (he/she) feel

[ ]

1. Less comfortable
2. About the same, or
3. More comfortable

than you (he/she) would have, if you (he/she) hadn't received the assistance of the Victim/Witness Assistance Program?

\*17. In general, do you think that the assistance you received from the Program affected your (daughter/son's) understanding of what was happening in the courtroom? Do you think it made:

[ ]

1. No difference
2. Some difference
3. A lot of difference?

Comment: \_\_\_\_\_.



## WHAT ABOUT REFERRALS TO OTHER COMMUNITY AGENCIES

18. Did the representative of the Victim/Witness Assistance Program give you information about other community agencies which could assist you in dealing with this case? (examples: women's shelters, children's services, housing authorities, medical services, mental health services employment, legal aid). [ ]

1. Yes
2. No
3. Doesn't know

IF YES: Did the Victim/Witness Assistance Program help you to contact any of these other community agency(ies)? [ ]

1. Yes
2. No

## IMPACT ON UNDERSTANDING OF THE JUSTICE PROCESS

\*19. Before becoming involved as a victim/witness in this court case, how much did you (your son/daughter) know about the Canadian court process? Would you describe yourself (son/daughter) as having: [ ]

1. No knowledge
2. Some knowledge
3. A lot of knowledge?

\*20. Do you feel that your (son/daughter's) understanding of the justice process has improved as a result of the assistance provided by the Victim/Witness Assistance Program? [ ]

1. Yes
2. No
3. Unsure

Comment: \_\_\_\_\_

21. Has the Program had any effect on your willingness to report any future crimes you witness to the Police? [ ]

1. Yes: Comment: \_\_\_\_\_
2. No: Comment: \_\_\_\_\_



\*22. a. What was the most important aspect of the V/W Program to you (your daughter or son)?

b. What was the second most important aspect of the V/W Program to you (your daughter or son)?

(rank 1st and 2nd most important aspects)

- Emotional support
- Information on court process
- Information on your case specifically
- How to testify in court
- Assistance/referral to other agencies
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_  
(specify)

\*23. Would you use the service again if you (your daughter/son) had to come to court?

[ ]

1. Yes
2. No
3. Doesn't know

24. Would you refer others to the service, if they had to come to court?

[ ]

1. Yes
2. No
3. Doesn't know

Comment: \_\_\_\_\_

25. Can you think of any ways in which the Victim/witness Assistance Program can be improved?

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**APPENDIX C**

**LIST OF PROFESSIONALS CONTACTED**

**AND**

**PROFESSIONAL SATISFACTION INTERVIEW ISSUES LIST**

**(Lee Axon, Contractor)**



## Agencies and Justice/Social Service Professionals Contacted

Windsor: V/W Coordinator  
Crown Attorney  
Police - Domestic Violence Unit  
- Victim Referral Unit  
Sexual Assault Crisis Centre  
Catholic Children's Aid Society  
Essex County Children's Aid Society  
Regional Children's Centre  
Victim Self-Help Group  
Hiatus House, Women's Shelter  
Victim Steering Committee

London: V/W Coordinator  
Crown Attorneys  
Police - Strathroy Town Police  
- London City Police: Child Sexual Abuse Unit, C.I.D. and  
Court Liaison/Administrative Officer  
Coordinating Committee on Family Violence  
London/Middlesex Child Abuse Council  
Child/Witness Project  
Battered Women's Advocacy Clinic  
Family Services  
Sexual Assault Centre, London  
Changing Ways (London) Inc.  
Family Court Clinic  
Women's Community House  
Private lawyer

Hamilton: V/W Coordinator  
Crown Attorney  
Police - Child Abuse Unit; Race and Ethnic Unit, Community  
Services; Training Bureau; C.I.D., Court Administration  
Officer  
Council on Domestic Violence for Hamilton/Wentworth  
Dundurn Community Legal Services  
Inasmuch House  
Family Services  
Catholic Family Services  
Sexual Assault Network



North York: V/W Coordinator  
Crown Attorney  
Police -  
North York Inter Agency Council Sub-Committee on Family Violence  
Barbra Schlifer Commemorative Clinic  
Toronto Rape Crisis Centre  
North York Women's Shelter  
Catholic Family Services  
Willowdale Community Legal Services  
Family Services  
The Metropolitan Toronto Special Committee on Child Abuse  
Justice for Children  
Children's Aid Society

Ottawa: V/W Coordinator  
Crown Attorneys  
Police - Ottawa Police Victim Crisis Unit  
Gloucester Police Victim Crisis Unit  
Nepean Police Victim Crisis Unit  
Catholic Family Services  
CAS/Police Liaison Committee  
Regional Coordinating Committee on Wife Assault  
Rape Crisis Centre  
New Directions  
Lanark County Interval House  
Naomi's Family Resource Centre, Winchester  
Ottawa Interval House  
Ottawa Carleton Regional Housing Authority  
Ottawa Family Service Centre  
Maison d'Amitié  
Gloucester Services for Abused Women  
Community Resource Centre of Kanata  
Youth Services Bureau  
Lower Town Resource Centre  
Renfrew County Committee for Abused Women  
Immigrant Women's Committee to End Wife Assault  
Private lawyer



## Interview Schedules

All respondents were informed that the Ministry of the Attorney General was undertaking an evaluation of the Court Victim/Witness Assistance Program in their city. As a general introduction, it was explained that the Ministry was interested in learning about their perceptions of the Program, i.e. the impact of the Program on victim/witnesses, the impact of the Program on their responsibilities, and any comments regarding desired changes, improvements, and so on.

All interviews began with a request that the respondent describe his or her understanding of the role of the V/W Program and the clients served by the Program.

Respondents were asked how often they used the Program and the success of their contacts with the Coordinator.

Procedures for referrals were reviewed.

Respondents were then asked whether they thought the Program had an impact on those referred to the Coordinator and, if so, in what way.

Similarly, respondents were asked to describe whether the Program affected their own responsibilities and in what way.

Lastly, respondents were asked if there were any changes they would like to see either with respect to the needs of the victim/witnesses or in regard to their own operations and those of the courts.

Opinions were solicited about overall benefits of or improvements to the Program as well as their general satisfaction with the Program.





